

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-07

NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01 L-03 SAM-01 OMB-01 PRS-01

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 IO-14 SCCT-02 EUR-25

SY-03 AF-10 SAB-01 DRC-01 /123 W

----- 050420

O 112220Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7350

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4270

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, FOR, IS, LE

SUBJECT: AFTERMATH OF SHEMONA INCIDENT

REF: STATE 073577

1. WAS SUMMONED AT 10.20 PM THIS EVENING TO PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND HAD 30 MINUTE CONVERSATION. ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER GHOSN WAS PRESENT AT MOST OF IT. WAS PRECEDED BY FRENCH AMBASSADOR AND WAS FOLLOWED BY BRITISH AND SOVIET CHARGES AND PRC AMBASSADOR. PRIME MINISTER OPENED DISCUSSION BY EXPRESSING CONCERN RE MEIR'S STATEMENT THIS AFTERNOON HOLDING LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND LEBANESE PEOPLE (HE EMPHASIZED THAT THIS WAS FIRST TIME LEBANESE PEOPLE HAD BEEN CITED) AS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MASSACRE AT SHEMONA. SAID WHAT CONCERNED HIM THE MOST WAS CURRENT "IRRATIONAL" MOOD IN ISRAEL DUE CURRENT GOVERNMENT CRISIS THERE AND HIS FEARS THAT ISRAELIS MIGHT CONDUCT REPRISAL FOR TODAY'S "MASSACRE."

2. I THEN INQUIRED IF HE HAD RECEIVED FROM AMBASSADOR

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KABBANI REPORT OF ATHERTON'S TALK WITH AMBASSADOR

(REFTEL). PRIME MINISTER RESPONDED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED THIS REPORT BUT AFTER REPEAT AFTER HE HAD MADE STATEMENT REGARDING RAID IN WHICH HE HAD INDICATED THAT ARAFAT THREE DAYS AGO HAD SAID THAT PLO WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT ENGAGE IN ILLEGAL CROSS-BORDER ACTIVITIES. HE OPINED THAT THIS STATEMENT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY COINCIDE WITH PROPOSAL MADE BY ATHERTON. (WE DO NOT REPEAT NOT HAVE TEXT OF STATEMENT BUT PRIME MINISTER PROMISED TO DELIVER ENGLISH TRANSLATION TO THE EMBASSY TONIGHT AND IF WE GET IT, IT WILL BE FORWARDED FORTHWITH. ASSUME, HOWEVER, IT WAS PICKED UP BY FBIS AND PRESS AGENCIES, FOR I BELIEVE IT HAS ALREADY BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED BY MRS. MEIR; SEE BELOW.)

3. PRIME MINISTER ALSO REFERRED TO TWO ISRAELI PILOTS CAPTURE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY AND SYRIAN WISHES THAT PILOTS BE TURNED OVER TO SYRIA. NOTWITHSTANDING DEFENSE MINISTER MAALOUF'S STATEMENTS DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY THAT THEY WOULD BE RETAINED BY GOL, PRIMIN SAID THIS MATTER WOULD BE "NEGOTIATED" WITH SYRIANS. I TRIED TO PIN PRIMIN DOWN ON WHAT HE MEANT BUT HE WAS SLIPPERY AS AN EEL, AS WAS GHOSN, WHO WAS PRESENT DURING THIS PORTION OF CONVERSATION. TOLD PRIMIN I BELIEVED THAT PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVE NOW WAS TO AVOID ISRAELI REPRISALS AND IF LEBANON WERE TO HAND PILOTS OVER TO SYRIA THIS WOULD BE WORSE THING THAT COULD BE DONE AT THIS TIME. PRIMIN AGREED BUT REITERATED MATTER WOULD BE NEGOTIATED WITH SYRIANS AT SOME LATER TIME. I AGAIN EMPHASIZED THAT ANY INDICATION OF ACQUIESCENCE TO SYRIAN DEMANDS AT THIS TIME WOULD BE THE HEIGHT OF FOLLY.

4. AT ABOUT THIS POINT IN CONVERSATION AN AIDE ENTERED TO REPORT TO PRIME MINISTER THAT MEIR HAD JUST MADE ANOTHER STATEMENT ON THE RADIO THAT NOTE HAD BEEN TAKEN OF PRIMIN'S STATEMENT BEFORE PARLIAMENT. PRIMIN APPEARED RELIEVED AND I ENCOURAGED HIM TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WAS A GOOD SIGN FOR IT WAS TANTAMOUNT TO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY GOI OF GOL DISASSOCIATION WITH RAID. PRIMIN THEN, WITH GHOSN'S HELP, TRIED TO ELABORATE THESIS THAT IN REALITY

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RAIDERS WERE NOT REPEAT NOT BASED IN LEBANON AND THAT NOTWITHSTANDING PFLP GC STATEMENT, THE RAIDERS CAME FROM BASES ALREADY ESTABLISHED IN ISRAEL. I STRONGLY SUGGESTED TO PRIMIN THAT THIS WAS FOR THE BIRDS, GIVEN LOCATION OF SHEMONA AND FACT THAT EVEN IF RAIDERS HAD BEEN IN ISRAEL FOR SOME TIME, THEY OBVIOUSLY CAME FROM BASIS IN LEBANON ORIGINALLY.

5. PRIMIN THEN REVERTED TO HIS FEARS OF ISRAELI REPRISAL. HE FORMALLY REQUESTED THAT I TRANSMIT TO THE DEPT HIS ARDENT DESIRE THAT WE ENDEAVOR CONVINCE GOI NOT REPEAT NOT TO TAKE ANY REPRISAL. TOLD PRIMIN I WOULD TRANSMIT HIS REQUEST URGENTLY TO THE DEPT BUT THAT I PERSONALLY CONSIDERED THAT IT WAS MOST LIKELY WE WERE ALREADY TAKING SUCH ACTION IN TEL AVIV. MUCH OF FOREGOING WAS REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES. BOTH PRIMIN AND GHOSN APPEARED DEEPLY PERTURBED, NERVOUS AND DISTRAUGHT.

6. PRIMIN DID NOT REPEAT NOT INDICATE PRECISELY LINE HE WOULD BE TAKING WITH OTHER VISITORS THIS EVENING OTHER THAN TO SAY THAT HE WISHED TO SHARE WITH OTHER FRIENDLY REPS GOL'S CONCERN.
GODLEY

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